Obsessions Of a Spymaster

COLD WARRIOR
James Jesus Angleton—
The CIA's Master Spy Hunter
By Tom Mangold
Simon and Schuster. 462 pp. $24.95

DANGEROUS LIAISON
The Inside Story of the
U.S.-Israeli Covert Relationship
By Andrew and Leslie Cockburn
HarperCollins. 416 pp. $25

By Charles R. Babcock

IN MAY of 1986, friends of Stephen Millett gathered in Washington for a memorial service for the late CIA officer, who was so secretive The Washington Post didn't run his obituary because Millett wouldn't let his family say what he did for a living. Millett worked for James Jesus Angleton, the controversial head of the CIA's counterintelligence branch, who no doubt was proud his colleague carried his secret life beyond the grave.

Among Millett's tasks was helping Angleton, who died in 1987, run the "Israeli account," the liaison with Israel's intelligence agency, the Mossad. Millett rates only a passing reference in the book on Angleton by Tom Mangold, a senior correspondent with BBC television. This is because Mangold barely mentions Angleton's work with the Israelis, saying in a footnote he found it irrelevant to his main topic.

The focus is on Angleton's obsessive hunt for a mole, a Soviet agent, in the CIA, and the destruction of careers that accompanied that unfulfilled quest. The author says in his preface that the book started out as biography, but changed direction when he learned more about Angleton's secrets. The story of the mole hunt has been told before, most notably, as Mangold says, by David Martin in *Wilderness of Mirrors*. But most of Martin's sources are anonymous. Mangold's feat is attaching names to the charges, giving them greater weight. The result is a searing indictment of Angleton's tenure (1954-74) as the CIA's top spychaser.

Mangold details Angleton's reliance on Soviet defector Anatoli Golitsin, who claimed his former employers had a master plan to deceive the West by deception and false defectors. The author digs deeply, too, into Angleton's role in the imprisonment of another defector, Yuri Nosenko. At times Mangold gets bogged down in the same arcane minutiae of the spy trade that he finds deplorable in Angleton.

Still, the research is compelling, backed up by devastating on-the-record quotes from more than 30 former intelligence officers. Chief among them is Leonard McCoy. He alleges that Angleton destroyed the credibility of a legion of Soviet defectors such as Nosenko, as well as the effectiveness of the officers who recruited them, and the entire Soviet bloc division.

Mangold's portrait of Angleton amounts to a major revision in the history of American espionage. His view of the cold warrior as an almost clinically paranoid poisoner of lives will cheer Angleton's critics and alarm his supporters. The problem for an outsider is how to judge one version of secret events over another. Few voices are heard explaining, much less defending, Angleton's views, and of course he cannot speak for himself.

The main biographical points of Angleton's life are known to students of the spy business. He was born in Idaho in 1917, first son of a Pershing cavalry officer who married a young Mexican woman. (She gave him the middle name Jesus, pronounced the Spanish way, Mangold notes.) He grew up in Italy, where his father was a businessman, and was schooled in England before going to Yale. Though considered brilliant, he was a lousy student, focusing his energies on a literary magazine.

When World II broke out, he quickly became a counterintelligence officer in England and then Italy. "America's spycatcher was made in Britain," Mangold writes, noting that Angleton was especially impressed with the lessons of the "Ultra" secret—cracking German codes—and the "double cross" system by which the British compromised German agents so that they sent false messages back to unsuspecting superiors.

Mangold marshals convincing, if not surprising, evidence that the defection in 1963 of Soviet agent Kim Philby, his friend from British intelligence, fed the mistrust that drove Angleton's obsession with the mole. He unearths other nuggets: Angleton's betrayal of a Soviet officer working for the CIA because he thought him another fake

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defector; his climbing a wall to steal the codebooks from the French embassy in Washington; his ignoring leads from another suspect Soviet officer—leads that Mangold says led to major espionage cases in France and Switzerland when discovered years later.

Angleton was forced to retire in 1974 amid investigations of illegal mail opening and other domestic spying on American citizens (another aspect of Angleton's career Mangold ignores). He spent the years until his death fighting a rearguard action against the perceived Soviet threat. The author notes that in 1976 then-CIA director George Bush listened to Angleton's convoluted theories about Soviet deception for several hours and then told the new counterintelligence chief he "couldn't really understand what he [Angleton] was talking about."

With no more spies to chase in exile, Angleton held court with many reporters, including this one, often over lunch at the Army-Navy Club. Novelists and essayists wrote of his solitary hobbies, growing orchids, flyfishing, making jewelry, burnishing a reputation where art imitated life.

Mangold commendably digs beneath the veneer. He gained the cooperation of Angleton's wife and daughters, who made available taped interviews and personal papers, including an intensely personal will from 1949. These glimpses of a fuller portrait tantalize the reader, especially one interested in what made Angleton tick. But the author never really develops them. The result is a one-dimensional view of a many-layered personality.

Despite the impressive documentation, then, the picture Mangold paints of Angleton's almost clinical paranoia on the mole hunt is unsettling. It was only part—one hopes the worst part—of his legacy. The author's conclusions sound convincing because officials like former CIA Director James Schlesinger refer to the "smoke, hints and bizarre allegations" behind Angleton's theories. After all, Angleton did believe several allied prime ministers were Soviet agents.

But the fuller story is missing. Did the spy hunter have no successes? As Mangold well knows, the essence of counterintelligence is challenging sources. He argues persuasively that Angleton did it too much (in branding a series of Soviet defectors as

James Jesus Angleton, the late CIA chief of counterintelligence

false). He seems to have done it too little.

Mangold has cracked the code on entering Angleton's secret world. And the case he makes against his quarry on the mole hunt is a shockingly good one. By choosing to focus so much on specific misdeeds, though, he misses an opportunity to step back and put his subject and his profession in context, to demystify the intelligence world. He could have pushed his sources more. He could have addressed whether any of the spy hunter's machinations mattered.

IN THEIR book, Andrew and Leslie Cockburn, both authors and documentary film makers, promise the reader an inside look at the covert relationship between the United States and Israel, which began even before the birth of the Jewish state in 1948 and the mating of James Angleton and the Mossad in 1951.

The subject is a ripe and timely one because the threat of Israeli intervention was always real in the recent Gulf war, and because the Israeli role in the notorious Iran-contra affair was never explored by investigators. But the Cockburns shed little new light on either topic.

Instead, they pull together threads from previous books and newspaper articles with their own reporting over 10 years and describe several notorious episodes in which the intelligence and military services of the two nations joined in a symbiotic alliance. They argue that Israel has been able to procure American power and money to advance its own cause—chiefly selling weapons, the backbone of the economy.

The United States, in turn, gained a wily proxy in its fight against communist influence around the world, from Africa to Central America. Angleton (who is honored with a memorial forest outside Jerusalem) early on recognized the intelligence value of Soviet emigres to the new country, and realized, too, the possibility that they would include penetration agents.

The Cockburns demonstrate the Israeli prowess in the arms trade in Latin America—the subject of public television documentaries the authors have produced—and South Africa. But they don't convincingly make the case for American collusion.

The book's most provocative sections cover Africa. With one hand, the Cockburns say, the Israelis took $10 million to $20 million a year from the CIA in the 1960s in a program code-named KK Mountain to represent American interests in Africa. With the other hand, the Israelis took an active role in generating a lucrative and secret cooperative arms venture—including nuclear—with South Africa, continuing to this day, despite the protests of many American and Israeli citizens.

The authors argue—not persuasively—that it was this interdependence that led a string of American presidents to ignore Israeli slights against its benefactor (which sends it $3 billion a year in foreign aid, far more than any other country). They cite the cover-up of the Israeli killing of 34 American sailors in an attack on the U.S.S. Liberty in 1967, the Israeli smuggling of several hundred pounds of nuclear-weapons grade uranium from a Pennsylvania plant called NUMEC in the 1960s and the arms trade with South Africa.

"The intense effort on the part of five administrations to keep the lid on public knowledge of Israel's nuclear weapons program, and that ally's espionage inside the United States strongly suggest that the U.S. was aiding and abetting the effort," the Cockburns write in detailing the NUMEC case. They do not back up their conclusion with hard reporting, however. And the life sentence now being served by Israeli spy Jonathan Jay Pollard seems to contradict such an attitude.

This practice of dropping explosive revelations with little documentation and no follow up, unfortunately, is repeated several times in the book. The Cockburns quote the late Stephen Smith as saying that Israel put $2 million into Harry Truman's 1948 campaign. They cite an anonymous former intelligence officer as saying we still have a program, once code-named GOLD, of eavesdropping on Jewish citizens who might be too sympathetic to Israel. They say the National Security Agency intercepted discussions in 1980 in which Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin discussed with New York Mayor Ed Koch how to defeat Jimmy Carter.

They let another NSA source say unchallenged that Angleton and the Israelis "spent a year cooking up the '67 war. It was a CIA operation, designed to get Nasser." Then they add on their own, "Such a verdict, from a source inside an agency that had the inclination and the facilities to monitor both the CIA and the Israelis, must carry some weight." Instead, accepting such statements without reporting them out detracts from the weight of the good work the Cockburns have done on an important subject. ■